



the compassion to care, the leadership to conquer

**Appropriations Committee
Public Hearing
Tuesday, March 27, 2012**

Senator Harp and Rep. Walker and distinguished members of the committee, please accept this written testimony on behalf of the Alzheimer's Association, CT Chapter (The Association) re: H.B. 5442 An Act Concerning Expenditures of the General Fund and H.B. 5445 An Act Concerning Expenditures of State Agencies Providing Social Services.

The Alzheimer's Association is a donor supported, non-profit organization serving the needs of families, health care professionals and those individuals who are affected with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias. The Association provides information and resources, support groups, education and training, and a 24 hour, 7 day a week Helpline.

We appreciate your support of the Alzheimer's Statewide Respite program and request that funding be restored for this essential **community-based program** that provides much needed relief for exhausted and stressed caregivers. Family caregivers provide most of the care for individuals with dementia so they can remain at home, delaying nursing institutionalization and saving state Medicaid dollars.

The Alzheimer's Statewide Respite Program

In Connecticut, there are over 70,000 citizens with Alzheimer's or other related dementia and more than 174,000 caregivers. Since its inception in 1998, the Statewide Respite Care Program has continued to be a success and provides the resources to a caregiver to establish an effective plan of care for the individual with Alzheimer's Disease and allows the family caregiver much needed periods of respite to care for their loved-ones. Specifically, family caregivers are eligible for minimal financial grants to help pay for services such as adult day care, in-home care and short-term inpatient respite care.

According to our 2012 Facts and Figures, Connecticut's family caregivers provide over \$2.4 billion in uncompensated services and endure significant physical and mental stress, and truly are the backbone of the long-term care system. Alzheimer's also places significant financial burdens on families and businesses. Businesses lose

billions a year in lost productivity and replacement expenses for employees who miss work or quit to care for a relative, according to the National Institute on Aging.

Alzheimer patients are most at risk of nursing home transition due to its unrelenting, progressive condition that destroys brain cells. On average, total Medicaid and Medicare costs for health care services, long-term and hospice care are three to nineteen times higher for older people living with Alzheimer's than for other older people.

The average respite grant of \$2,500 per client saves the state Medicaid dollars, when considering the average cost of nursing institutionalization is \$79,000.00 per year. In addition, most individuals prefer to remain in the comfort of their homes where feasible. Seventy percent of individuals with Alzheimer's live at home with their loved-ones.

Outcome measures reported by the Department of Social Services ending June 30, 2011 demonstrate a high level of satisfaction from program participants, while the changing needs of families continue to demand interventions on the part of the care managers to accommodate variable family dynamics and service needs. In fact, 92% of program participants indicated that the services were beneficial in assisting the client in remaining at home during some portion of the program year, and 79% stated the care recipient was able to remain home for the entire program year, and 98% affirmatively responded the program was effective in improving the caregiver and client's quality of life and reducing caregiver stress.

The Governor's proposal to cut \$229,000.00 from this program will impact over a hundred individuals and their families who rely on critical resources and assistance to support or care for their loved ones. We commemorate the Governor for moving toward community-based home care options. However, respite care is a successful and established community based safety-net program already in place.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony to request that you restore funding for the FY'13 year. The Alzheimer's Association asks that you not adopt the governor's proposal to cut \$229,000.00 for these vital services. Please feel free to contact me at Laurie.julian@alz.org, or (860) 828-2828.